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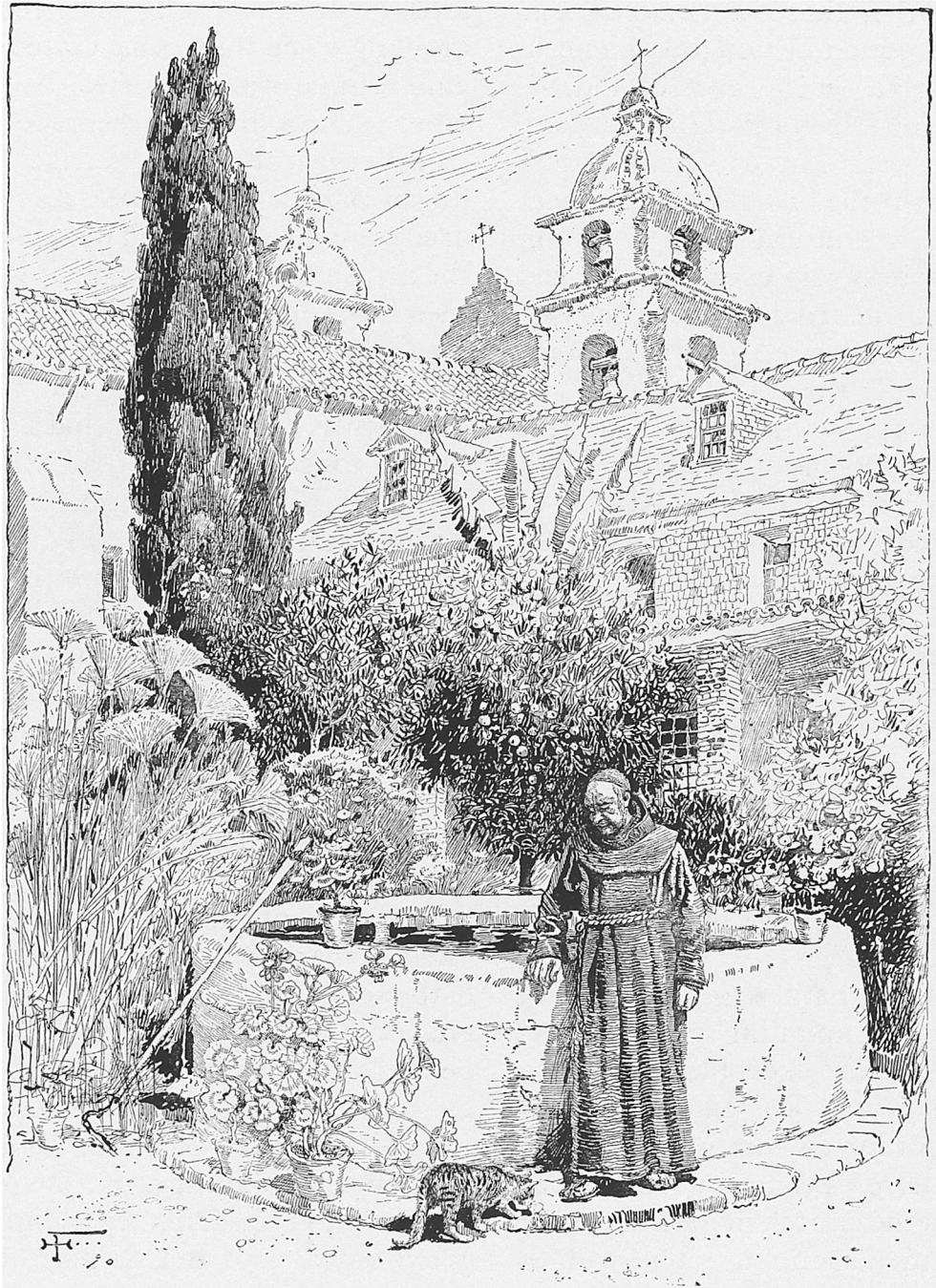
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The Garden, Santa Barbara

AN OLD CALIFORNIA MISSION

[From "Romantic America," by Robert Haven Schauffler, The Century Co.]

SANTA BARBARA is a place of balm which equals a judicious blend of Capri, Florida, Seville, Switzerland, Samoa, and the Isles of the Blest, situate beyond Ultima Thule. One wanders through a purple mist of bougainvillea, enveloped in the fragrance of lemon blooms, down avenues of palmetto and gum. Then one reaches an old mission that is invested with a charm as complete as that of the atmosphere.

My first view of its twin bell-towers was almost the best. It came over a hedge starred with Passion blooms in Padre Street. There were the towers beyond the corner of a rose-corniced bungalow, framed by foliage of bamboo and eucalyptus, set in a canyon's mouth against a sheer mountain wall that was broadly painted with shadow and streaked with scarves of filmy cloud. It was a fit setting for the one California mission which has never passed out of Franciscan control, the one most redolent today of the romance of Catholicism.

The mission patio, from which, according to the unfailing rule of cloisters, all women except queens and presidents' wives are excluded, was just the spot for day-dreams. My first morning there was a typical one. From the choir of the church floated the virile sound of men's singing. The padres were chanting the Sixth and None Office for St. George while belated brothers were running across the court, a little ungainly in their robes, and with sandaled bare feet flashing underneath. Others, fingering holy books, were pacing the walks. And a few of them

looked pitifully young and fresh and glowing to be thus consecrated to the chill routine of monasteries. But if anywhere such a life could seem less than chill, it was here in this irised close, full of palms, roses, lilies and a hundred other exuberant plants set among the arms of rare cacti, with pillars and tiles framing them round, and above, the gable of the church flanked by the two noble towers. After the office of the day was done, though, and a brown-robed, tonsured figure had rung the great bell thrice seven times, it was a moving sight to see the procession pass to the refectory. First came the rigid, tottering elder brothers, then the sad, stern, middle-aged ones, and then the blooming boys, all with heads bent and features set as if in the grip of some overwhelming preoccupation. They looked like the stuff that pioneer heroes and martyrs are made of.

Perhaps one never realizes the full poetry of Santa Barbara until he has knelt, some misty evening, on the steps of the softly plashing mission fountain, and looked out under the sprays of the peppers, and seen how soft and spiritual the church façade becomes in the veiled light of the arcs that are like so many moons shining from the one inevitable source. On such a night one grows aware of the wonder of the broad shadows thrown by those pilasters that go almost to nothing in the common light of day, but are transformed now with as poignant a sorcery as ever gleamed from the front of a Notre Dame or an Amiens.